The fact, as the Buddha insisted, is that one's personality changes as time passes. Yet the sense of identity is at no time lacking. —C. J. DUCASSE

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SUBTLETIES OF DEVOTION

ALMOST at the end of the second group of Rules in *Light on the Path,* there is the injunction; "Hold fast to that which has neither substance nor existence." The intellectual meaning of this rule is not obscure—it proposes a cleaving to the Self alone, as distinguished from any and all its embodiments. But precisely because intellectual meanings, when conveyed abstractly, are easy to grasp, the *operational* meaning may remain almost wholly unrecognized. This becomes clear from what is said to introduce the rule: "It is written that for him who is on the threshold of divinity no law can be framed, no guide can exist. Yet to enlighten this disciple, the final struggle may be thus expressed."

Are there any more limited cases of an experience of this sort, from which some anticipatory idea of its meaning may be gained? Conceivably, the upanishadic warning against suddenly awakening a dreamer has application here. Actually, *any* sort of sudden or violent reduction of the field of awareness in which the ego happens to be involved may have traumatic effects. If the life-powers are engaged in the field, a kind of "death" is the inevitable result. This clearly is what Plato meant when he said that the art of the philosopher consists in learning how to die easily, since the man for whom death is only a superficial change is one who has found his sense of reality elsewhere than in the physical body.

There are two ways in which the reduction of the field takes place. One is by the process of abstraction from the forms of experience, undertaken deliberately, through the discipline of concentration as set forth in the *Yoga Aphorisms of Patanjali.* The other is by some

dissolution—involuntary, so far as the indwelling consciousness is concerned—of form. In the latter case, the ego is forced to seek elsewhere for a sense of continuing being—or, as we say today, for his "security" and "identity."

The various metabolisms of embodied existence provide many safeguards against a too sudden stripping away of the environment in which the consciousness has become involved. Take so simple a thing as sensory deprivation. It has been found by a recent series of experiments that individuals who are placed in a totally dark room, from which all sound has also been sealed off, before long become subjects of hallucination. The inner psychic organism fills the void created by isolation. In short, for those who have no training at all in "holding fast to that which has no substance or existence," a psychologically projected environment takes the place of the objective circumstances which have been temporarily removed. The ego cannot exist without his familiar field. No doubt a prolonged experience of this sort would result in an insanity, comparable, one may say, to the aberration which relieves those afflicted with an intolerable grief. There is a release of the ego to the womb-like state of an inner plane, and a suspension of evolution.

Incarnation might be regarded as a condition of the continual testing of the survival-capacity of the individual's idea of self. The more deeply rooted in true consciousness this idea of self, the less vulnerable is the individual to the slings and arrows of change. Pain is the concomitant of all change for which the ego is unprepared. Philosophy is the means of preparation.

This is an account of what is nowadays termed "existential pain" —the pain that results simply from being human. It is unavoidable, and yet, it has an antidote. To reduce the pain of existence, one must learn to reduce the sense of separateness, since from the delusive idea of being a separate self come all the frustrations and denials the individual suffers because of his attempts to do as a separate self what cannot be done in isolation. This Great Heresy has many names, and, as *Light on the Path* says—

> It lives fruitfully in the heart of the devoted disciple as well as in the heart of the man of desire. Only the strong man can kill it out. The weak must wait for its growth, its fruition, its death. And it is a plant that lives and increases throughout the ages. It flowers when the man has accumulated unto himself innumerable existences. He who will enter upon the path of power must tear this thing out of his heart. And then the heart will bleed, and the

> whole life of the man seem to be utterly destroyed. This ordeal must be endured: it may come at the first step of the perilous ladder which leads to the path of life: it may not come until the last. But, O disciple, remember that it has to be endured, and fasten the energies of your soul upon the task.

At the outset, the only advantage possessed by one who thinks of himself as a "disciple" is his knowledge, learned from the instruction of his teachers, that many of the feelings he has at the beginning of a cycle of experience, or involvement, cannot possibly survive the end of that cycle. To know this at the beginning is a great boon, for it enables him to say to himself—although he may not say it—that, however great the attractions and "reality" of its conditions, a more enduring reality lies beyond. Knowing this, he has the philosopher's capacity to endure vicissitudes—and *all* cycles which gain the attention of the ego involve vicissitudes, which are completed by dissolution of the very ground of the experiences gone through.

A practical question to ask is: What happens to those who are without this philosophical reassurance?

Thoughtful, humanitarian individuals who look out upon the affairs of the world today are continually amazed at what is happening in the name of the high principles of freedom and justice; they are amazed at the desperation into which men have been led by the threat of change, by the weakening of trusted social forms, and by the inadequacy of familiar remedies, in relation to what they have from childhood learned to hold dear. The pain of an ending, one might say, has become intolerable; change, for many men, does not signify beginnings, but only the threat of total dissolution. In such times, even the voices of those who cry out for mutual understanding are heard as darkly evil counsels, and there is a general hardening of hearts.

The need, in all such crises, is to find that which, in the terms of the cycle that is ending, may have "neither substance nor existence," yet is the stuff of viable becoming for the cycle yet to be born.

There is a sense in which beginnings have in them a timeless essence—they include the Promethean vision as well as factors of delimitation which mark out the stage of development in egoity that is to come. The Prometheans are those who can see ahead; and, be it noted, they gain this capacity by becoming able, among other things, to be bearers of pain.

CHALLENGE AND PURPOSE

FACING challenging situations arouses a sense of the heroic in man, since he is innately a "hero" and feels the need of rising to meet occasions that will test his potential powers. But never does the potential hero become such without preparatory disciplines and attitudinal transformations—a fact which the myths, in classical form, tend to ignore. A beginning, of course, is to realize that frustrations are not failures but timely opportunities to check direction, confirm readiness, and clarify purpose. An example of such use of "opportunity" is illustrated in these words by Robert Crosbie:

> Ships, sailors and men of all kinds get into "doldrums" at times. The sailors know that there is no getting anywhere without the ship, and the ship goes not without the wind, so they—just wait for the wind. Some, I have heard, go to whistling in order to raise a breeze, but I do not imagine that the wind is hurried at all by their efforts, and the whistlers only keep themselves in a state of irritation by their deferred hopes. The wiser take the opportunity to repair their kits, and do a general overhauling, so that when the wind does come, all is ready for it. The general position with them, no doubt, is that a sailor's life is "work all the time," the *kind of work* determined only by the circumstances. (*The Friendly Philosopher.*)

Deliberate delay, as distinguished from procrastination—another kind of "waiting"—also has its beneficent use when unexpected decisions must be made or when impulse urges to action. Then, "Wait on a letter, sleep on a plan," Mr. Judge advised.

Man has both a mysterious unknown heredity and an immediate traceable one. His *purpose for being* is inextricably bound up with ancient lineage, whereas his destined being *now* is linked karmically with the immediate "time, place and circumstance." The result of this dual demand is unceasing unrest: constant adaptation to change, on the one hand, and, on the other, an ever present "divine discontent" amid things of change.

A true challenge is an invitation to engage, not in a contest, but in life. *The Bhagavad-Gita,* characterized as the "Book of Devo-

tion," is a Book of Challenge for those who rationalize a desire to escape responsibility:

> Whence, O Arjuna, cometh upon thee this dejection in matters of difficulty, so unworthy of the honorable, and leading neither to heaven nor to glory? It is disgraceful, contrary to duty, and the foundation of dishonor. Yield not thus to unmanliness, for it ill-becometh one like thee. Abandon, O tormentor of thy foes, this despicable weakness of thy heart, and stand up.

Throughout the eighteen chapters, Arjuna's emphases move from an overwhelming concern with himself to a search for meaning, and then to a recognition that there is a purpose in life. At one stage man says: *I* did it; at another: I *did* it; and then: I did *it*—in realization that what needs doing is more important than who does it. Self-effacement is incident to SELF-Knowledge—as shown in such passages as the following:

> That power which the disciple shall covet is that which shall make him appear as nothing in the eyes of men. (*Light on the Path.*)

> Self-doomed to live through future Kalpas, unthanked and unperceived by men; wedged as a stone with countless other stones which form the "Guardian Wall," such is thy future if the seventh Gate thou passest. Built by the hands of many Masters of Compassion, raised by their tortures, by their blood cemented, it shields mankind, since man is man, protecting it from further and far greater misery and sorrow. (*Voice of the Silence.*)

The greatest power man can possess is the power of the fully free action which embodies willingness to sacrifice self—symbolized in the myth of Prometheus and exemplified in the lives of Saviors of mankind. Every "man" has Promethean powers—*is* a potential Prometheus, despite those obstacles of immediate heredity which provide focus for thought and feeling. Each can face what he "sets out to do," but he has also to face that caricature of living—distortions resulting from partially-enlightened action, and from "man's inhumanity to man," of which the recent uprising in the Watts area of Los Angeles is a solemn reminder. It is relatively easy to clean up "debris" following a *natural* catastrophe, but what "restoration" compensates for damage done to human hearts and minds?

Each must answer this—and every crucial question—for himself. The generality of mankind mean well, but some rely on "good intentions" as a guide to clear-seeing, rest on that *feeling,* and have no opinions of their own. For them a "change in mind" is actually

only change-in-receptivity to another's thought. They form the indeterminate masses—subject to the *evil* of influence which interferes with exercise of Will. The self-disciplined mind is ever creative, and, stimulated by impersonal achievement or sensitive to the implications of Brotherhood, will find natural expression. A notable instance is the International Geophysical Year, 1957-58, characterized as "An experience in international cooperation in science which is without precedent in history." This worldwide intellectual effort "for peaceful purposes" involved "between 20,000 and 30,000 scientists of 67 nations, with innumerable supporting workers." In the *Annual Report for the Smithsonian Institution* (1959), Elliot B. Roberts, writing on "The IGY in Retrospect," comments:

> It is truly remarkable that such an enterprise was successfully planned and executed, in a period of unprecedented political passions and tension, through direct contact between scientists themselves without recourse to diplomatic intervention or formal treaties. As a result we have new and powerful ties on an individual level between leading scientists of many lands, mounting understanding for one another, a great breach in the Iron Curtain, and a demonstration that men of many races and political faiths can work together fruitfully. Even if these accomplishments cannot be exactly evaluated, their meaning for the world is deep and pervasive.
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> A number of great discoveries were made and more will inevitably grow out of the gradual assimilation, in years to come, of the accumulated data of the IGY. The borders of our knowledge of man's environment were pushed back in several important respects, with an already vast and growing store of new knowledge which will sharply influence the course of human development.
>
> The space age was inaugurated under the auspices of the IGY. . . .

Granted, that "Affairs of science transcend the barriers of nationalism, the cries of race and clan, and the provincialism of prejudice." But for whom, and how many, and how long? What about human nature—has *it* changed? Evidently not, for enthusiasm manifested at the "inauguration of the space age" has been followed by indignation and childish envy at thought of possibly not being first in the space-race.

Prejudice is a many-faceted barrier that only knowledge of Self can transcend. This most ancient of "powerful ties" must be realized "on an individual level" by *every* man, through self-induced and

self-devised efforts—in whatever walk of life or field of interest. In the life of the evolving Soul—man's sense of Self—acquired knowledge is not as important as what a man *does* with what he knows—and why. Will the sum of this incarnation be heedless and needless selfishness, thoughtful or enlightened selfishness, or self-sacrifice which is the daily and momentary challenge of killing out prejudice within oneself?

The gaining of wisdom demands examination of motive, which is hidden and has far-reaching moral consequences. It is not a matter of geography, nationality or ideology, and the great lesson to learn —though it may come through suffering—is that Brotherhood is a fact in Nature, that Mankind *is* One, and that Karma knows no boundaries. In the words of H. P. Blavatsky:

> It is an occult law, moreover, that no man can rise superior to his individual failings, without lifting, be it ever so little, the whole body of which he is an integral part. In the same way, no man can sin, nor suffer the effects of sin, alone. In reality, there is no such thing as "Separateness"; and the nearest approach to that selfish state, which the laws of life permit, is in the intent or motive. (*The Key to Theosophy.*)

The Long Road

The way to realisation is a slow one. Man grows by countless lives into his divine self-existence. Every life, every act, is a step which we may take either backward or forward. By one's thought, will and action one determines what one is yet to be; the wise man keeps his inward and spiritual eye ever directed to the world of the eternal idea, and if only the pursuit is maintained, the individual becomes freed from the goads of sensualism. . . .

Our feet are set on the path of the higher life, though they wander uncertainly and the path is not seen clearly. There may be the attraction of the ideal but no assent of the whole nature to it. The utter self-giving which alone can achieve the end is not easy. But no effort is wasted. We are still far from realising the implications of the spiritual dignity of man in matters of conduct, individual and social. If only we can support this higher life, the long labour of the cosmic process will receive its crowning justification and the evolution of centuries unfold its profound significance.

—Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan

letters • questions • comment

Words, because they are the concrete expression of the subjective, inner man, become his tools as found in language; but contemporary speech often proves inadequate for lack of proper words. Is it not, therefore, desirable to invent or redefine words to convey meanings? Certainly, language "grows," as witness most of the philological developments found in our lexicons. Scientists, and scholars in particular, have aided by a constant minting of new words.

In the last century, at the founding of the Theosophical Society, it became clear that a theosophical nomenclature must be developed, even though this might involve words that were "foreign-sounding" to Western ears. Madame Blavatsky, as the chief founder, and William Q. Judge emphasized the inadequacy of the English language to provide fitting terms in which to clothe the essential psychological truths of Theosophy. In a similar way, by the injection of revitalized meanings, many words can be better ensouled with the spirit and majesty of the ancient Wisdom-Religion in this modern era.

In *The Key to Theosophy,* H.P.B. invites consideration of such questions as she discusses the need for improving theosophical nomenclature. Under the heading, "Definite Words for Definite Things," she begins by sympathizing with an inquirer's comment that the terminology employed by Theosophists in general exposition was quite undisciplined. She then remarks:

> I have thought of this myself. The whole trouble has arisen from this: we have started our expositions of, and discussion about, the "Principles," using their Sanskrit names instead of coining immediately, for the use of Theosophists, their equivalents in English. We must try and remedy this now.

This need not, however, be taken as an endorsement of unlimited invention of new philosophical terms, for H.P.B. is speaking of the particular need to supply adequate English equivalents for the Sanskrit names of distinct "principles" and the nature of man. Her own disposition, evidenced in her article, "Psychic and Noëtic Action," was to make use of both new and rejuvenated terms given usage by contemporary thinkers. In this way, she showed that she

was not "inventing" a new school of thought, and that Theosophy, properly considered, was to be discovered as an underlying affirmative theme among the advanced thinkers of any age.

Consistency in this approach, indeed, sharply distinguishes H.P.B.'s writings from those of others who have borrowed from her major works and set up personally dominated schools of thought. Invariably, when such provincialism has characterized sectarian groups, newly-coined terms have been plentiful. Both William Q. Judge and Robert Crosbie, whose approach has been synthesized in the tradition of the United Lodge of Theosophists, refrained from this sort of inventiveness—establishing a safeguarding precedent against personalizing theosophical study and promulgation.

The suggestion that appropriate English equivalents should be employed by Theosophists to clarify Sanskrit terms does not imply that the Sanskrit words, themselves (which often convey necessary philosophical subtlety), be replaced. Mr. Judge says as much in a short article, "Another Theosophical Prophecy" (reprinted in THEOSOPHY 3:66):

> The Sanskrit language will one day be again the language used by man upon this earth, first in science and in metaphysics, and later on in common life. . . . Terms now preserved in that noblest of languages will creep into the literature and the press of the day, crop up in reviews, appear in various books and treatises. . . . This new language cannot be English . . . but will be one which is scientific in all that makes a language, and has been enriched by ages of study of metaphysics and the true science.

Even in such abbreviated reference works as Joseph Shipley's *Dictionary of Word Origins* we discover that the etymologist must know something of Sanskrit in order to trace many psychological and philosophical terms to their origins. Thus the "pure" meaning —and the most useful meaning, from a theosophical point of view— is often suggested by looking up the original Sanskrit word. "Desire," for instance, has in Sanskrit a neutral, psychological meaning. Only in the terms provided by Christian theology has "desire" been associated exclusively with "corruptions of the senses," with evil or degradation. Noting the increasing attention now paid to the teachings of Eastern philosophies and religions by Western psychologists, we may predict that more Sanskrit terms will find their way into English usage with each decade, and that dictionaries will consequently be enriched in a manner calculated to encourage a philosophical attitude of mind.

As an example, we offer the fruitful effort of one adroit in enriching the meanings of words—in this case the projection of a new association of ideas by means of the word "altrocentric." This term, he believes, suggests one who is confirmed in the practice of altruism.

To suggest such a term as "altrocentric," therefore, may possibly serve as a stimulus to thought, without any effort to establish habitual usage. A particular difficulty in this instance, of course, lies in the fact that "egocentrism," as a limiting use of the mind, cannot be regarded as the opposite of true altruism—for the latter connotes a broadening of empathy and understanding radiating *from* the "egoic center" and reaching beyond any one fixation of attention.

In pondering upon word meanings and usages, we are led repeatedly to a peculiar observation—that words in the Theosophical lexicon are apt to have developed a duality of meaning, according to time, place, and usage. A word or a phrase is of itself equivocal or bifocal, and contains no clear meaning until vitalized by the thought-current of a rational man. Karen Horney, in *Neurosis and Human Growth,* indicates that a person who endeavors to submerge himself in socially useful activities may become a rather incapable altruist, precisely because some of his own distortions of personality have not been faced and corrected. The "shirking of responsibility for self" she writes, "lowers the creative potential of the individual." The inner self is operating at low frequency, and "when the real self is 'locked out' and exiled, one's *integrating power* will be at a low ebb." These are the complications present in many average representations of "altruism," and must be granted. Thus we have the puzzling phenomenon of the man who appears to be an "altruist" demanding a great deal of appreciation for his efforts.

Mr. Shipley gives a rather more informative discussion of altruism than that supplied by Webster:

> The Fr. expression, *le bien d'autrui,* the right of another, was shortened in legal phrase to *l'autrui.* The philosopher Comte took this shorter term (possibly from the It. form *altrui,* from L., *alteri,* to another) and coined the noun *altruisme*—translated into Eng. as *altruism.* Comte opposed it to *egoism,* from L. *ego,* I. *Egoism* is the general philosophical point of view; *egotism* (the same word, with the *t* added to separate the vowels) has come to be used for a more personal selfishness, a conceit, a too frequent using of the word *I.*

Le bien d'autrui originated as a philosophical and ethical concern

for what H.P.B. calls the "slightest invasion" of another's right. What then, in terms of altruism, are the fundamental rights of man? Behind all conceptions of political liberty and economic security is the right of man to be interpreted, first, even if only tentatively, according to *his own philosophy* and standard of values. Unless we are able to attempt this, eager to find, in *anyone,* a portion of ourselves; unless understanding can bridge the gap between widely differing versions of "proper" opinion and conduct—we are "altruists" only in name.

Therefore it is that one of the foci for effort in the Theosophical Movement of the present and the future lies in reinterpreting and revivifying the higher altruism of Buddhi-Manasic understanding. The original basis of the Theosophical Society encouraged a friendly comparative study of unfamiliar religious beliefs and this modulus clearly can be extended to include an *attempt* to understand sympathetically every opinion or form of conduct divergent from prevailing norms.

Altruism is not a matter of specific deeds, nor is it an ideal. Regarded as an idea, it becomes identified with conventional conceptions of virtue, and this also is misleading. Apparently, whenever a man regards altruism as a virtue he loses part of its real meaning. As Mr. Judge once wrote, "Altruism is not so much an ideal as a matter of practice."

So another hidden question about "concern for others" is whether the concern is positive or negative in feeling. Some are interested in troubles and sufferings to divert attention from their own, and these may easily accept the whole of human existence as a "misery-go-round." But one who has an affirmative philosophy of life—an orientation which suggests the possibility of a better world which may be brought to birth—offers a rich gift to all whom he contacts, though he never meddles in the personal problems of another, with managerial delusions. The greatest of all gifts is that of a philosophy revealing infinite potentialities for human progress.

The English language, as every language to some degree, contains many terms useful in speaking of Theosophy. Any word which signifies or even *implies* the existence of a transcendent "Inner Man" is, or could be, a natural part of theosophic vocabulary; for the fundamental affirmation of Theosophy is that such an inner man exists—the real Self in us all—and that it can come to know more about itself.

CREMATION AND RESURRECTION

(Continued)

THE foundation stones upon which the Christian doctrine of the "resurrection of the flesh" is built is the ascension of Jesus and the statement (Job 19:25-6) that "in my flesh shall I see God." But the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, some will say, is not based so much upon texts such as these, as on the *fact* of Jesus' ascension and on the belief that, just as the Master's physical frame was resurrected from the sepulchre, so in time will be the bodies of the faithful also. This belief assumes, of course, that there is no difference between the body of Jesus and the bodies of ordinary men, that what happened to Him will happen to others, and that although the Master himself is admitted to be immeasurably superior to the general run of humanity, his body is not—and this is probably a great mistake. Few if any present-day Christians are familiar with the tradition, going back to the days of primitive Christianity, that Jesus' body was more angelic in its nature than human, that it was actually an ethereal form, although possessing all the characteristics of objectivity, and that His resurrection was not the revitalization of a decaying or decayed corpse (as His followers expect their own to be), but rather the etherealization, or withdrawal from the physical to the metaphysical plane, of a vesture that was already pure and divine.

Through study of comparative religions, however, it is beginning to be questioned whether the body of Jesus, as the bodies of Buddha, Krishna, and other Divine Saviours are held to have been, might not have been non-physical after all—as the Christian Gnostics taught —and that the resurrection, therefore, was not a resurrection of the *flesh*. And through re-examination of ancient texts, and study of some newly-discovered documents, the statement in Job has been found to be incorrect. Instead of "*in* my flesh shall I see God," as now shown in the *King James Version*, it should read "*without* my flesh I shall see God." The *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible, published in 1953 (representing the labor of eighty-two scholars of

various denominations), now carries this and other important changes—all, they say, on the basis of "convincing evidence." And if the findings of these men are correct, and there is little reason to believe they are not, then the biblical support for the doctrine of the resurrection of the body ceases to exist. The Theosophist would like to know how the sincere Christian will refute this position, unless, indeed, he decides to burn the new translation, as a few overzealous preachers have already done—just as some of their forebears did when the *King James Version* was first published in the year 1611.

None of the other biblical texts which sectarians usually point to in support of this illogical doctrine actually says anything at all about the flesh or the *physical* body being resurrected. In the view of the Theosophist, statements such as the one about the dead being "raised incorruptible" (1 Cor. 15:32), and another about the time coming when "all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth" (John 5:28-29), refer to the coming forth of the Divine Ego, or Soul, in its eternal celestial body, such as the one mentioned by St. Paul in 1 Cor. 15:40. According to *The Secret Doctrine*, every night of our lives, while the body sleeps, the Real Man, or True Self, returns to his spiritual home and there functions in one or another of his invisible vestures. Why, if this is true, should we not at death transfer our consciousness, just as we do in dreams, to a purer and higher form, and there commune with Higher Intelligences, or even with Deity?

The most outspoken opponents of cremation, then, are those sincere Christians who have been taught to believe that man *is* his body, and that it is the body that resurrects. Believing these views to be supported by the Bible, they have regarded cremation as a species of blasphemy, undertaken to defy the will of God. But more and more intelligent people are coming to realize that none of these positions is tenable—that man is not his body, but is a spiritual being, as all great religions teach, and that none of the scriptures, not even the Bible, teaches the resurrection of the body. The human form, these ancient scriptures say, is but the instrument of the Soul, which at death returns to the earth from which it came. For what, after all, is death? Is it not the dissolution into its component parts of a vehicle that is no longer serviceable to the user? The processes of decay, corruption, and decomposition, are but forms of slow *combustion;* and cremation merely hastens the process through the

instrumentality of fire.

By returning to the ancient custom of cremation, the whole Western world could speedily do away with cemeteries, which are a growing menace to society. Not only are graveyards blemishes upon the landscape, but the astral and gaseous influences that emanate from the thousands of decaying corpses buried there take their toll of the physical and psychic well-being of all people. The following plea for cremation, which appeared many years ago in the law journal *Jury,* graphically portrays the dangers to which we subject ourselves daily by permitting the burial of dead bodies within the corporate limits of our cities:

> There is nothing surer than that in the not far distant future the cremation of dead bodies will be in universal vogue. It is now ascertained that earth-worms convey microbes of disease from cemeteries, and distribute them at their own sweet will. We have never yet been able to comprehend how about thirty thousand putrefying bodies in an acre or two of ground can be anything less than an unmitigated danger to those living within a few miles of their influence. Earth is a pretty good deodorizer, but there are limits to its capacity. If any one has studied the slow process of animal putrefaction, they know how revolting it is, and what a danger arises from the noisome gases which escape. Do the advocates of interment imagine that the gases from thousands of closely-packed corpses escape toward the centre of the earth? If so, they will have to learn that they easily permeate the few feet of earth, and have liberty to roam in the sunlight and poison those who happen to cross the path of their wanderings. Every malignant disease which curses mankind today is the abomination of law calling on us to improve our habits and live in accordance with reason, and the only hope of our ever being rid of epidemics is by the slow but sure process of education. (*Old Diary Leaves,* Vol. 1, pp. 176-7.)

Éliphas Lévi, the learned Kabalist and mystic who lived around the middle of last century, and who was at one time an *abbé* of the Roman Catholic Church (later unfrocked when he acquired fame as a Kabalist), issued even sterner warnings of the dangers of decaying corpses. Author of several works on philosophical magic, Lévi held that nature records on the invisible tablets of the astral or sidereal light the images of all past events, which he called the "imagination of nature." Further:

> The eternal memory preserves only the imperishable; all that passes in Time belongs of right to oblivion. The preservation of corpses is a violation of the laws of nature; it is an outrage on the

> modesty of death, which hides the works of destruction, as we should hide those of reproduction. Preserving corpses is to create phantoms in the imagination of the earth; the spectres of the nightmare, of hallucination, and fear, are but the wandering photographs of preserved corpses. [One of the Masters adds a marginal note saying: "We never bury our dead. They are burnt or left above the earth."] It is these preserved or imperfectly destroyed corpses, which spread, amid the living, plague, cholera, contagious diseases, sadness, scepticism and disgust of life. The cemeteries poison the atmosphere of towns, and the miasma of corpses blight the children even in the bosoms of their mother. (*Theosophist,* October, 1881.)

Cremation, then, from every point of view, is beneficial, according to the teachings of Theosophy. Material fire, working only on the material plane, serves but to hasten the return of the component parts of the dead body to their respective kingdoms. It serves also to free the astral form from its earthly attractions, so that it, in turn, may dissipate more quickly on its own plane. The burning of the physical body, however, has no effect whatever upon the *Immortal Triad,* or real Man, and thus endangers in no way the coveted promise of resurrection. Freed from the clogging weight of the body, the Soul no longer has contact with earth life and is free to work out and assimilate in *devachan,* or heaven, the experiences of the life last lived. But the most salutary effect of all is the physical and psychological benefit that accrues to those who are left behind. For as soon as cremation is completed, the bereaved may feel an immediate release.

In the second and third centuries of our era, a heated controversy raged as to the nature of Jesus' body—whether it was *flesh,* as we know flesh, or some kind of divine form composed of spiritual substance. Tertullian, a writer of the early Latin Church, wrote two long treatises on the subject—*On the Flesh of Christ* and *On the Resurrection of the Flesh*—his declared purpose in both being to combat the teachings of the Christian Gnostics, who held that the resurrection of the physical body is a fallacy, and that the vesture of Jesus, in spite of its apparent solidity, was really *non-physical* and of a nature peculiar to itself. In the eyes of Tertullian and other Church Fathers, all the Gnostic philosophers, of course, were considered "heretics." Yet, in the formative days of Christianity, Gnosticism was a strong and constructive influence, appealing alike to the mind and heart of the sincere seeker after Truth. Its dedication to the principle of absolute freedom of thought, however, was looked

upon as a threat to the growing formalization of the Church—the result being that the writings of its principal leaders were for the large part destroyed. Almost all we know of their teachings today comes to us from the half-true, half-false "refutations" of the Fathers. Thus, in the refutations of Tertullian, we read:

> They [the Gnostics] have achieved their first error in the article of His [Jesus'] very flesh; contending with Marcion and Basilides that it possessed no reality; or else holding, after the heretical tenets of Valentinus, and according the Apelles, that it has qualities peculiar to itself. (*The Writings of the Ante-Nicene Fathers,* Vol. III, p. 546.)

To the materialistic thinker—and most of us in this age, unfortunately, are that, at least in degree—a non-physical body must appear to be a contradiction in terms. Yet, if radio and television electronics have taught us anything, it ought to be seen that there may be other planes of Nature besides the physical, that forms may exist on those invisible planes which are capable of penetrating gross matter. Where each one of us who reads these words is sitting at the present moment, countless invisible forms, projected into the ether by television transmitters around the globe, are inter-penetrating the walls, floors, and ceilings of our homes and offices, infiltrating the air we breathe, and pulsating through the very marrow of our bones. Why, then, should it be difficult to conceive that there may be astral, mental, and spiritual bodies, as well as physical—each with its own definite rate of vibration and density? And why, if this is true, should not Deity, of whom Jesus, Buddha, and Krishna are almost universally held to be *Incarnations,* possess and use such superior forms, which would certainly be more refined and tractable than the cumbersome earthly bodies used by mortals, however wonderful the latter may be? There is an old Tibetan tradition concerning Divine Incarnations contained in a treatise on *The Mystery of Buddha,* by H. P. Blavatsky, which reads:

> There is a mystery in such incarnations [as Gautama, Shankara, Jesus and a few others] and they are outside and beyond the cycle of general rebirths. Rebirths may be divided into three classes: the divine incarnations called Avatars [Saviors]; those of Adepts who give up Nirvana for the sake of helping humanity—the Nirmanakayas; and the natural succession of rebirths for all—the common law. The Avatara is an appearance, one which may be termed a special illusion within the natural illusion that reigns on the planes under the sway of that power, Maya [Illusion]; the Adept is re-born consciously, at his will and pleasure;

the units of the common herd unconsciously follow the great law of dual evolution.

What *is* an Avatara? for the term before being used ought to be well understood. It is a descent of the manifested Deity—whether under the specific name of Shiva, Vishnu, or Adi-Buddha [or Christ]—into an illusive form of individuality, an appearance which to men on this illusive plane is objective, but is not so in sober fact. That illusive form, having neither past nor future, because it had neither previous incarnation nor will it have subsequent rebirths, has naught to do with Karma [the law of sowing and reaping], which has therefore no hold on it . . . the personalities known as Gautama, Shankara, Jesus and a few others . . . were all born through the same Power.

Wherever one turns, the story is ever the same. And herein lies the value of comparative study of all the world's great scriptures. In the Brahmanic *Bhagavad-Gita,* for example, the body of Krishna (the Hindu Christ) is held to be of the same *mayavic,* or illusionary, character as the bodies of Buddha and Jesus. In Chapter IV, Krishna says to his disciple Arjuna:

Both I and thou have passed through many births, O harasser of thy foes! Mine are known unto me, but thou knowest not of thine. Even though myself unborn, of changeless essence, and the lord of all existence, yet in presiding over nature—which is mine—I am born but through my own *maya* [illusion], the mystic power of self-ideation, the eternal thought in the eternal mind. I produce myself among creatures, O son of Bharata, whenever there is a decline of virtue and an insurrection of vice and injustice in the world; and thus I incarnate from age to age for the preservation of the just, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of righteousness.

Thus, we find the tradition of Divine Incarnations, or Avatars, present in both Eastern and Western traditions.

(To be concluded)

THE RESURRECTION IS NOW

> The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.
>
> —John 5:25

RESURRECTION had several meanings to the ancients. There was, first, the rebirth of Great Nature in the springtime, symbolized by the Scandinavian goddess *Ostara,* from whom the English *Easter* derives— a time when all growing things awaken, or resurrect, from their long winter's sleep. Significantly, the resurrection of Jesus coincides with this universal rebirth in Nature.

Secondly, the resurrection of each individual soul after death, which, following a long or short period of rest between lives, reincarnates again on earth into a new body of flesh and blood. This is the general law for the great mass of humankind, without distinctions of race, creed, caste, or condition in life.

A third type of resurrection, which pertains to mankind as a whole, is concurrent with what is known in theosophical parlance as "the moment of choice"—that point in human evolution when the "sheep," allegorically speaking, will be separated from the "goats." This climactic choice, indicated as coming in the distant future, is prepared for by each race and nation in their lesser cycles, and, Karma permitting, can be brought on by any *individual* soul at any time. Whenever the "moment of choice" comes, and by whomsoever made, it represents the culmination of the innumerable small choices to either right or left which the beings, singly or *en masse,* have made from day to day. For our present race, this event, according to the teachings of Theosophy, will take place about 427,000 years hence, and will mark the close of Kali Yuga, or the Dark Age. Then, indeed, will humanity stand redeemed, which is the meaning of the New Testament reference to the "second coming of Christ," and also what the Hindus speak of as the appearance of the *Kalki Avatar.*

At this time, it is said, the heavens will open, and *Vishnu,* in his tenth avatar, will appear "seated on a milk-white steed, with a drawn sword blazing like a comet, for the final destruction of the wicked,

the renovation of creation and the restoration of purity." (Compare *Revelations* 6:2.) This is the event anticipated, also, by the Adventists, who go on saying that "the coming of [the carnalized] Christ" is near at hand, and who seek, therefore, to prepare themselves for "the end of the world." But those who understand something of the hidden meaning of the universally expected Saviors—the *Kalki Avatar* of the Buddhists and Hindus, the Messiah of the Jews, the Sosiosh of the Zoroastrians, and the Christ of the Christians—know that it is not "the end of the world," but rather "the close of the age," as the translators of the 1953 *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible have found out. (The phrase, "the end of the world," appearing in the *King James Version* in Matt. 13:39; 12:49; 24:3; 28:20 and Heb. 9:26, should be changed to read "the close of the age.")

Those units of the human race who choose aright, and thus fashion their lives, as far as this is possible, in the likeness of the Christ within, will continue their evolution in a regenerated humanity. The purity and knowledge of these "children of God" will enable them to resurrect *at will* their inner spiritual selves from the physical casements, and to live consciously on higher spiritual planes. The "goats" of humanity, those who will have allowed themselves to fall behind, will have to await new cycles, when they, too, after having learned some valuable lessons, will strive anew to success in other races and humanities.

The fourth type of resurrection, and the most important of all—providing the key to all the others—is the "second birth," so called, that inner awakening to spiritual life which occurs *during the lifetime* of the individual. Signalized by what the ancients referred to as "initiation into the Mysteries," it is of this resurrection, or rebirth, that Jesus speaks when He says. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3.) The questions of Nicodemus in this chapter, and the Master's replies, testify that the "birth" here spoken of is no physical event, but is verily a rebirth, or reaffirmation, of the Spiritual Will. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (John 3:6.)

But when, it is asked, will this great event occur? When will the scales of the eyes fall away? Does this "second birth" depend upon one's self, or is it the unmerited gift of an outside God? There is an old saying that "when the materials are ready the Master will appear," and that the Master is *within*. But it is as difficult to know

when the inner God of any man will reassert itself and blossom forth into flower, say the scriptures, as to know whither the wind listeth. Theosophy promises, and so does Christianity when correctly understood, that the individual who strives to conform his lower personal will to the supreme Spiritual Will of the Christ within, and who forgets self in sacrificial work for others, will some day, in some lifetime, awaken to the light, and experience what is called by the Hindus the opening of "the eye of Siva." Every impulse toward the higher life comes from the God in man, from his own *Higher Self*—and the individual who lives, as best he can, according to that inward light, will come to know his oneness with Deity.

This is the initiation, or resurrection, experienced by Arjuna in the eleventh chapter of *The Bhagavad Gita* when, after having been given the divine eye by Krishna (the Christ within), he becomes, however briefly, one with his Higher Self, or God. "I behold, O God of gods, within thy frame all beings and things of every kind. . . . I see thee without beginning, middle, or end, of infinite power with arms innumerable, the sun and moon thy eyes, thy mouth a flaming fire, overmastering the whole universe with thy majesty." The true initiation is always an inner awakening. As H. P. Blavatsky said:

> Christ—the true esoteric SAVIOUR—*is no man*, but the DIVINE PRINCIPLE in every human being. He who strives to resurrect the Spirit *crucified in him by his own terrestrial passions*, and buried deep in the "sepulchre" of his sinful flesh; he who has the strength to roll back *the stone of matter* from the door of his own *inner* sanctuary, he *has the risen Christ in him*. (THEOSOPHY 50:437.)

It is the teaching of the Wisdom Religion that the true resurrection is now, during life, and not after death! This is probably what St. Paul meant in his letter to the Philippians 3:10-12, when he said: "That I may know him [Christ], and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made comfortable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. *Not as though I had already attained* [italics added], either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I *do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before." What does the Apostle imply in the statement that he had not already attained unto the resurrection, if not that the true resurrection comes before death? What did Jesus mean when

He said, "The hour is coming, *and now is* [italics added], when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live," if not the same thing—that the true resurrection is of the Spirit, and not of the body, and that it *"now is"?*

The spirit of man, says H. P. Blavatsky, is "crucified in him by his own terrestrial passions, and buried deep in the 'sepulchre' [the tomb or body] of his sinful flesh," and that the individual who has the strength to roll back "the stone of matter from the door of his own inner sanctuary, he has the risen Christ in him." He thus resurrects the Spirit, in other words.

In early Christian days, the individual in whom the Christ, or his Higher Self, did not shine forth, was considered as *dead* and to rise, or resurrect, from the "dead" meant to forsake the things of sinful flesh and to attend to the behests of the spiritual, or nobler, parts of man's nature. There is little doubt that someone whom we call Jesus was crucified or killed, and that *something resurrected,* or was seen to appear after his death. But the lives and events of such beings as Jesus, Buddha, Krishna, and Zoroaster are all said to be symbolic, and to have a far deeper meaning than appears on the surface. "A great sage," said Wm. Q. Judge, "could easily adopt a human event in order to erect a noble philosophical system upon such an allegorical foundation." Might it be that the resurrection of Jesus symbolized something far more grand and profound than we have supposed—that is, the awakening of the inner man to the divinity of his own Soul? Might this be what St. Paul meant when he said: "If ye then be risen [resurrected] with Christ, seek those things which are above . . . For ye are dead [still living for the personal], and your [true] life is hid with Christ in God"? (Col. 3:1-3.)

Of the four types of resurrection thus described, the most important of all, and the only one over which we have any control, is the "second birth," so-called. For it is here, during life in the body, that regeneration must be achieved. And Theosophy warns aspiring souls not to put off until tomorrow those decisions for right that can be made today. The individual who thinks he can eat, drink, and be merry today, while he postpones his resurrection until after death —or worse still, until the great "Moment of Choice," when mankind as a whole will be tested—will in all probability be disappointed. The man who allows thoughtlessness and selfishness to grow day by day, until it becomes a habit, may find himself morally bankrupt at the hour of trial.

YOUTH FORUM

The importance of philosophical thought is repeatedly emphasized in the pages of this magazine and in study classes. Yet how does one become a "philosopher" in a practical sense?

Everyone is ultimately his own philosopher—only the *idiom* of discourse changes. There is not a man who doesn't have ideas or at least "feelings" about what is real, true, or good in his life. Even if he claims to know nothing, he is making a statement about his own "being" or the nature of his "self." We might say that every idea we hold predisposes us in some direction and that all these ideas compose our philosophy. Good or bad, symmetrical or confused, we use and re-use these thoughts as though they were parts of our bodies.

The problem, therefore, is more a matter of what form our philosophy will take and whether becoming aware of it, ourselves, will make a significant difference in our lives. If it really doesn't matter what or how we think, then perhaps the unexamined life needs no changing. What are the conditions that might make the examined life—the potentially alterable life—worth while? They are many, but pain is probably a common prompting factor in making examination a "necessity."

Our question, for example, arose from the experience of a friend's serious illness. On the evening of his second day in bed, he wondered how one goes about thinking "philosophically." A feverish urgency filled that particular night with endless mental probings. Nothing was allowed to remain "sacred" in his past; every experience had to justify itself to the question, Why. On that evening he might have been good company for Socrates or Thoreau.

It seems that an extreme condition can initiate either philosophical thought or black despair. Clark Moustakas captured the emotion underlying much of such positive searching. One of his clients in psychotherapy said:

> Do you know what it is not to know how you feel, not to know your own thoughts, not to know what you believe, not to know

> what you want, not to be sure of anything but endless pain and suffering? And everyone else takes you for granted, on already formed opinions and actions, the same words, the same ways. How do I start to live again? I'm dying and I can't stop breathing. I can't stop living.

We all know degrees of this experience. How is it resolved? If the pain lasts, we may come to see that the cry is coming from one who has made himself a prisoner. Slowly but surely, without our awareness, we had accepted the image others held of us. It is as though we embraced the very conventions which had gradually bent us into the latest commercialized pattern of what makes a "man."

It is not enough, however, to be an iconoclast of personal and limited ideas of one's self. The self-analysis which brought us this far must change in direction as we begin to exhaust the reasons underlying our pain. Our sense of identity at this point is a function of "what we are not." Rollo May once pointed out that after a man has gone through intensive self-examination, traced his past to its origins, and said everything possible about his life—then, what is left is the real man, the "self." "Self," however, is a term which may be as empty as the most superficial life or it may contain the qualities which we attribute to the highest consciousness. From such a concept as "the Self," the student of Theosophy is given the opportunity to extend the idea of "who-he-is" to as grand a radius as he chooses. He is faced here with a fundamental philosophical problem—and it *must* be answered: Who am I?

Emerson observed that he could not say anything about another person except that which he, himself, was. Thus, the self becomes, through the plastic potency of thought, whatever we believe to be Real.

Truly, "This earth, Disciple, is the Hall of Sorrow, wherein are set along the path of dire probations, traps to ensnare thy Ego by the delusion called 'Great Heresy'." That heresy, as *The Voice of the Silence* says, is belief in the "separateness of Self from the One Universal, Infinite Self."

on the lookout

A Spiritual Renaissance

From month to month the pages of *Alba Spirituale* ("Spiritual Dawn"), the official organ of the Italian Section of the Theosophical Society, furnish unmistakable evidence that a genuine Theosophical renaissance is taking place in Italy. The "Original Teachings" and the "Lines of Work" established by the teachers are receiving increasing attention, both in reprints from the original literature and in articles by this journal's editors and other contributors. The June lead article, titled "Quo Vadis," consists of the Report of Dr. Roberto Hack, General Secretary of the Italian T.S., to the National Convention in Rapallo on May 27. In it we read:

> More than three years ago . . . we distributed among the members of the Italian Section a manifesto-program significantly entitled: *"For the renovation of the Italian Theosophical Society"* . . . We affirmed the great need for spreading broadcast those Original Teachings capable of leading toward true spiritual knowledge, toward soul culture, toward spiritual development. H.P.B., founder of the modern Theosophical Movement, in the first number of *The Theosophist* (October 1879) founded by her, wrote: "The Society, as a body, has no creed, as creeds are but the shells around spiritual knowledge; and Theosophy, in its fruition, is itself—the very essence of philosophical and theistic enquiry. The very root idea of the Society is free and fearless investigation. . . ." After the death of H.P.B. and particularly during the first decades of the twentieth century there arose within the Theosophical Society a tendency toward authoritarianism, toward blind belief, toward a predilection for forms and ceremonies of various kinds, to the detriment of true freedom of thought and of fearless independent investigation, thus sacrificing vigorous individual effort and giving rise to varied theories which in time became a kind of dogmatic creed. As we have shown, both in the pages of our monthly magazine, ALBA SPIRITUALE, and in my Reports to our previous Conventions—in Milan in 1963 and in Perugia 1964—this alarming state of affairs fortunately has reawakened the conscience of many theosophists, and in various National Sections of the international Theosophical Movement, in Europe, in America and in Asia we witness a grow-

ing stirring of vitality, an increasingly powerful desire to return to the original Source, the Original Message, free from later speculations and interpretations. . . .

I would like to close this first part of my Report with some ideas expressed by H.P.B. in her Message to her faithful co-worker W. Q. Judge on the occasion of the second annual Convention of the American Section in Chicago in April 1888: ". . . Let no man set up a popery instead of Theosophy, as this would be suicidal and has ever ended most fatally. We are all fellow-students, more or less advanced; but no one belonging to the Theosophical Society ought to count himself as more than, at best, a pupil-teacher—one who has no right to dogmatize. . . ."

Judge Group Founded in Milan

In the second part of his Report, Dr. Hack says:

On May 14, 1965 a new Group was formed in Milan, named after "William Q. Judge." . . . This is no doubt a promising sign of due recognition, so long withheld, of an eminent and valiant Theosophist, Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society, intimate co-worker and disciple of H.P.B., whose fate it was to be the target of so much cruel calumny in his theosophical career. . . . I believe I am not mistaken in thinking that this new Group will play a significant part in the future affairs of the Italian Section, and prove a dynamic force, rich in energy and creative vitality. . . .

First Italian Edition of the "Ocean"

In the December, 1964, issue of *Alba Spirituale,* the following advertisement appeared:

WILLIAM QUAN JUDGE *The Ocean of Theosophy*

The most concise and the clearest exposition of the Esoteric Philosophy, or Theosophy, written by a Master of this science, Co-Founder of the Theosophical Society, disciple, friend and colleague of H.P.B. who said of him: "He has been part of myself for æons past."

First Italian Edition Price Lire 1,000.

Publishers: Editrice Libraria Sirio, Trieste.

"Theosophy and the Great Theosophical Movement"

This is the title of the lead article in the August *Alba Spirituale,* by Dr. Roberto Hack and Dr. Roberto Fantechi, jointly. These writers say:

To avoid the failure of the Movement, to help it along in its natural development, a task confronts us: to study, to understand, to have horizons as vast as possible, to *lead the life* necessary for the acquirement of the immortal Wisdom which is our

legitimate spiritual heritage. We shall not succeed in this as long as we allow leaders, interpreters or "authorities" to interpose themselves between us and Theosophy. We must decide to behave like adults, facing Theosophy directly as a fact that involves us personally. In a matter of such importance we cannot leave to others the task of choosing for us the true from the false.

Back to Blavatsky

An unsigned article in *Alba Spirituale* for last January makes vigorous reply to those who suggest that going "Back to Blavatsky" means "going backward." This view is repeated, with comment following:

"Back to H.P.B.: ah, but then you want to establish a theosophical Bible, a Koran of Occultism! Then outside H.P.B.'s books there is no Theosophy, there is nothing good."

No, Brethren, rest assured: outside of H.P.B.'s books there is much good. H.P.B. herself tells us that, and urges us to search for Truth wherever it may be found. . . .

No one who has seriously read and studied the Works of H.P.B. can suggest that they can ever become a bible, because the *method* therein pursued is the very antithesis of such a possibility. H.P.B. never presents a teaching as a given fact, but discusses it, demonstrates it, supports it with whatever proofs available, examines the objections that may be brought against it; in brief, she directs the student to the sources (mostly in the Religions, Philosophies and Sciences of Mankind) which will enable him to form his own independent judgment. . . .

"Back to H.P.B." means to go back to her method, sworn enemy of every Bible and every Koran whatsoever. . . .

And if it is true that precious sources of Truth are to be found outside of H.P.B.'s books (and H.P.B. herself stated that she was transmitting but a fragment of the "accumulated Wisdom of the Ages"), it is not true—as some seem to suggest—that the study of H.P.B.'s works is useless. H.P.B. did not write for entertainment, and if She has accepted to fulfill, and Her Masters have asked Her to do so, the herculean task her writings represent (in all something like fifteen large volumes), this must have a meaning.

The question is: what would modern Theosophy and the Theosophical Society be without H.P.B.? The answer is easy: NOTHING. . . .

"Back to H.P.B." does not mean "to eliminate all the rest": it means to embrace all and everybody in a vast, objective, non-sectarian, non-creedal vision: it means to have before one not a catechism, but a Book where the great Lesson is the one which H.P.B. admirably sums up in these words:

"Once that a student abandons the old and trodden highway of *routine* and enters upon the solitary path of independent thought—Godward—he is a Theosophist: an original thinker, a seeker after the eternal truth 'with an inspiration of his own' to solve the universal problems." (First number of the *Theosophist.*)

Can there be clearer words? "Back to H.P.B." means exactly the opposite of a retrogression: it means to proceed with an open mind beyond all superstition, in a courageous search for Truth, wherever it may be, and in an equally courageous rejection of error *wherever this may be.*

Dr. Hack's efforts to re-establish the writings of H. P. Blavatsky and William Q. Judge as source books for theosophical study in the Italian T.S. are noted approvingly by the *Canadian Theosophist,* which reprints portions of Dr. Hack's Rapallo Report in its September-October issue.

Sincere, Though Delayed, Appreciation

The following note appears in the August issue of *The Middle Way,* Journal of the Buddhist Society, London, England:

THE VOICE OF THE SILENCE

For reasons we have never understood, Buddhists in England seem reluctant to accept this exquisite small work as part of the literature of Buddhism. Yet it was quoted by William James in the *Varieties of Religious Experience,* and by Dr. Evans-Wentz, an authority on Tibet. The late Anagarika Dharmapala described it as a "pure Buddhist work," and now by chance we have come across a report of a remark by Dr. D. T. Suzuki made many years ago to the American pioneer Buddhist, Mrs. Salanave. "I saw *The Voice of the Silence* for the first time when at Oxford. I got a copy and sent it to Mrs. Suzuki (then Miss Beatrice Lane) at Columbia University, writing to her: 'Here is the real Mahayana Buddhism'." Has anyone ever *read* it who did not rank it among the world's greatest scriptures?

H.P.B. gave the origin of these verses in her preface to *The Voice of the Silence*:

The work from which I here translate forms part of the same series as that from which the "Stanzas" of the *Book of Dzyan* were taken, on which the *Secret Doctrine* is based. Together with the great mystic work called *Paramartha,* which, the legend of *Nagarjuna* tells us, was delivered to the great Arhat by the Nagas or "Serpents" (in truth a name given to the ancient Initiates), the *Book of the Golden Precepts* claims the same origin. Yet its maxims and ideas are found under different forms in

Sanskrit works, since most of the greatest Arhats, the first followers of Gautama Buddha, were Hindus. . . .

James Stephens and the Theosophical Movement

The first biography of this noted Irish writer has recently been published in the United States (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), under the title, *James Stephens, His Work and an Account of His Life*. The author, Hilary Pyle, states in the Preface:

> To attempt a biography of James Stephens may be a matter for question. It is well known that he deplored the modern tendency to dwell on the sensational elements in an author's life to the neglect of what is most important, his writing. . . . Some of his work of course has dated, but the best has not, and it is the important bridge between the first Irish writers of the Celtic Twilight period and the new, more sophisticated writers.

Stephens, who died in 1950, was a protegé and close friend of Æ (George Russell). Æ was introduced to the Dublin Theosophical Society by W. B. Yeats about 1887. After the death of William Q. Judge, who was the special hero of the Dublin Theosophists, Æ reformed this group under the name the Hermetic Society, dissociating it from organized theosophical groups but continuing in loyalty to the teachings of Mme. Blavatsky and Mr. Judge. The Hermetic Society attracted many of the younger Irish poets, and, according to Russell, all who attended the meetings "more or less passed through a bath of Theosophical ideas." (*The Aryan Path,* Vol. 6, pp. 722-6.) In fact, the Irish literary renaissance stemmed from the theosophical activities of Russell and Yeats, (See *Ireland's Literary Renaissance,* by Ernest Boyd, New York, Knopf, 1922; and *A Memoir of Æ,* by John Eglinton, Macmillan, 1937.)

Blake and Theosophy

Chapter IV of the Stephens biography bears the title "The Influence of Blake and of Theosophy." Earlier in the book Miss Pyle wrote:

> Stephens was not the first of the Irish poets to be drawn towards William Blake. Enthusiasm for the poet was general in the last part of the nineteenth century. Yeats and his fellows, when reacting from the narrowness of Irish Protestantism, and interesting themselves in Theosophy, found that Blake, a literary man, had much in common with the fundamental principles of the Theosophical movement, and that he believed in the unity of things, and in the quality of life in all things. In 1893, Yeats and Ellis produced the first complete collection of Blake's works,

a massive edition, in which they analyzed Blake's philosophy. . . . Blake's ideals, and his conviction that the poet's profession was religiously significant, were a source of inspiration to the Irish writers.

Interest in "The Secret Doctrine"

Miss Pyle continues: [Stephens'] intercourse with Æ and contact with other like-minded men on the occasions when he attended the Hermetic Society to hear Æ read from the Indian Scriptures had aroused his interest in Theosophy and there are traces of it in his poetry though not till *The Demi-Gods* can it be seen as something separate from his Blakean philosophy. He already knew a great deal about Madame Blavatsky from Russell, and about this time he had been reading her more seriously—*The Secret Doctrine* is a difficult book and in *The Insurrection* in Dublin he was still reading it. . . ." Miss Pyle then gives some general facts of Theosophical history and teaching:

> Madame Blavatsky's cult of Theosophy had made a lasting impression on the Anglo-Irish poets of the first generation, and its tenets helped to satisfy their spiritual cravings. These were intensified by what seemed to them the smugness in conventional religious persuasion. Theosophy is free enough in doctrine, but it demands a personal devotion. For theosophists, the goal in life is the unity of all living things in an Absolute Being, and, to achieve this, life on earth must be spent in attaining self-perfection through the inspiration of the divine will. God is depersonalized and man must seek to depersonalize himself and link the divine essence in his human personality with its source, the one Reality.

Vicissitudes of the Dublin Lodge

"The Dublin Lodge of the Theosophical Society," says Miss Pyle, "had been founded in April 1886 by Madame Blavatsky's *chela,* or disciple, Charles Johnston. It was honoured almost at once by a visit from Mohini Chatterjee, the famous Hindu theosophist; but it did not come to public attention until about two years later, when George Russell was becoming interested. It was then that it became subject to misunderstanding and condemnation, but it continued sporadically for about ten years." The author continues:

> Colonel Olcott, the President of the Theosophical Society . . . came to Dublin to lecture in 1889; and in 1892 the first edition of *The Irish Theosophist* appeared. However, the movement was too small, and was regarded too suspiciously by outsiders for it to flourish, and Æ's attempts to establish an Ideal "House-

hold," where a number of theosophically inclined men and women were to live together without friction and concern themselves with the task of self-perfection, came miserably to grief. After this Æ realized that Theosophy must be the concern of the individual and indeed he, Yeats and Stephens developed their own conceptions of it in a personal manner. It was a private commitment. . . . Æ was the one who adhered most closely to the original principles of the Dublin Lodge.

Reincarnation and Evolution

In *The Demi-Gods* Stephens attempted an account of the Theosophical idea of evolution. It is contrasted with a hilarious account of chaos in the heaven and hell of rejected Christianity. Stephens tells of the seven orders of being, as taught in Theosophy. His character O'Brien is supposed to be a being of the "Fifth Round" and is growing towards complete spirituality. As Miss Pyle states:

The very form of the journey in the book and the way the archangels leave as soon as they reach the point at which they started is reminiscent of Madame Blavatsky's cycles of existence. Stephens also described his view of the doctrine of Reincarnation: "While generation succeeds generation a man has to fight the same fight. At the end he wins. . . ."

Open-Minded Policy

The following letter appeared in the May 12 *Hudson Dispatch* (New Jersey), a newspaper that often prints letters from theosophical students:

It was interesting to read the letter from Thomas J. Johnson, pastor, First United Presbyterian Church, suggesting that you exercise censorship on letters received and publish only what does not offend those of other persuasions and not permit any to try to use your columns for evangelization.

We are reminded that the Theosophist H. P. Blavatsky wrote in 1888 that the magazine "Lucifer opens its columns to writers whose views of life and things may not only slightly differ from its own, but even be diametrically opposed to the opinions of the editors. The object of the latter is to elicit truth, not to advance the interest of any particular ism, or to pander to any hobbies, likes or dislikes of any class of readers."

A healthy diversity of opinion seems to be the American way and we appreciate your open-minded policy.

Lo Here, Lo There

In this time of accelerating human longings, coupled with a decline in the stability of long-established authorities, it is natural that

there should be a resurgence of interest in clairvoyant wonders. And natural, too, that the stirring of psychic powers, as a concomitant of the manasic awakening predicted by H.P.B., should attract particular attention from those whose sense of reality is more related to the imagery of religion than with the impersonal progress of scientific inquiry. It comes as no surprise, therefore, that the book, *A Gift of Prophecy* (William Morrow, 1965), devoted to the clairvoyant impressions and visions of Jeane Dixon, a Catholic sensitive, is gaining unusual popularity. The author, Ruth Montgomery, is a syndicated columnist who has been publicizing Mrs. Dixon's prophecies since 1952. These include, according to report, anticipations of the assassinations of Gandhi and President Kennedy, the fatal plane crash of Dag Hammarskjold, and other events such as the successful launching of the Soviet Sputnik.

Compared to Swedenborg

A Catholic psychiatrist suggests that Mrs. Dixon's powers exceed those of Swedenborg, arguing that his "reported visions concerning heaven and hell" were without proof, while "Mrs. Dixon foresees births, deaths, and world-shaking events of historical significance." There seems little reason to doubt the integrity of this unusual sensitive, who is not a medium, does not commercialize her talents, and has no hesitation in likening the present decadence of American life to the moral decline that preceded the fall of Rome. There are, however, strong political overtones in some of her predictions, which could easily increase the fears and passions of the day among all those for whom religious supernaturalism still has an attraction. Mrs. Dixon anticipates future alignments of political power which will threaten to engulf Western civilization, much as barbarian invasions put an end to Rome, and speaks even of violent attack on the person of the Pope, although the Church's power, in her view, "would still be there." Jeane Dixon, in other words, looks to a restoration of Christianity on new foundations, and predicts that a human agent of this regeneration "will bring together all mankind in one all-embracing faith."

Forebodings of "God's Will"

It is natural enough for a sensitive filled with ardent faith in the personal God of Christianity to interpret her psychic perceptions in terms of the familiar institutional symbols. As Mr. Judge says in the *Ocean,* "the effect of dogmatic religious education" is to give

"memory certain pictures that always prevent *Manas* from gaining full activity." What may be deplored, during these anxious hours of history, is the effect of the personal sincerity of the psychic who makes such disclosures, which can only add to the fervor of those who see in the predictions a new chapter of "divine revelation." Mrs. Dixon believes that she has forevisions of the course of events which will inevitably come to pass because they are willed by "God," while other of her predictions she regards as forecasts of happenings which may be altered by the actions of men. Actually, all the imagery of these prophecies may be prone to error suggested by preconception, just as Swedenborg's descriptions of the inhabitants of other planets were colored by his knowledge of people on earth. Meanwhile, it is always the elements of recognizable truth in clairvoyant perception that gives spurious support to emotional inclinations.

U.S. Justice Department on "Death Penalty"

According to the Los Angeles *Times* (July 24), "the Justice Department came out Friday [July 23] for abolition of the death penalty." The opinion of the department was expressed in a letter to Congress by Ramsey Clark, deputy attorney general, and reads in part:

> Modern penology with its correctional and rehabilitation skills affords far greater benefits to society than the death penalty which is inconsistent with its goals.
>
> This nation is too great in its resources and too good in its purposes to engage in the light of present understanding in the deliberate taking of human life either as a punishment or a deterrent to domestic crime.
>
> We favor the abolition of the death penalty.

The *Times* notes, however, that "the department hierarchy [is] at odds with the position taken by many leaders in law enforcement, including the department's best-known employee, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover."

The firm stand taken by Theosophists against the death penalty, with frequent marshalling in Lookout of arguments in support of abolition, hardly needs repetition here.